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considers the "contract, pact, or private agreement" theory of Magna Carta as making it comparable with an instrument relating to "the hire of a waggon" (p. 126), and doubtfully concludes: "Magna Carta may perhaps be described as a treaty or a contract which enacts or proclaims a number of rules and customs as binding in England, and reduces them to writing in the unsuitable form of a feudal charter granted by King John to the freemen of England and their heirs" (p. 129). When it comes to an estimate of the true value of Magna Carta the author lacks again that clear view of its fundamental importance in preserving the "definite contract-idea of the feudal system" as "the corner-stone of the English limited monarchy" which he could have gained from Professor G. B. Adams's articles. Other fundamental questions, such as the logic of the arrangement of the document (cf. pp. 129-144), receive like unsatisfactory treatment.

The first limitation mentioned could readily be justified by the author though to be deplored by the historical student; the second limitation is both deplorable and unscientific, but might have its excuses; the third limitation is fatal to sound scholarship.

Further mention of the Commentaries may be omitted, except possibly a note upon the frequent use made of Coke and Blackstone; but the appendix, consisting of eight documents, calls for attention. Liebermann's description and collation of the texts of the Coronation Charter of Henry I. is ignored; the Unknown Charter of Liberties is "perhaps" identified with the Schedule of 27 April, 1215, rather than assigned to Prince Louis's expedition in accordance with the preferences of Hubert Hall and Bémont; the definitive edition of Magna Carta of 1225 is omitted. As for the "Select Bibliography and List of Authorities referred to", of the eleven works named especially relating to Magna Carta, B. C. Barrington's "curiosity" (*AM. HIST. REV.*, V. 387) is one, and as far as the bibliography or index is concerned an unsuspecting reader might suppose it a book to be used, unless perchance he should stumble upon note 3, page 212. Two more of the eleven, Lau and Hantos, are mentioned nowhere else in the book so far as can be discovered. It would be idle to undertake to name the important works that have been omitted from the bibliography. The Index to Statutes contains no explanatory headings, the eight-page Index omits important characters, as e. g., Richard d'Anesty (pp. 309-310).

In conclusion, one feels compelled to state that although for want of something better this work will undoubtedly be consulted, nevertheless taken as a whole it cannot be regarded as of more than mediocre value.

HENRY LEWIN CANNON.

*The Story of Ferrara.* By ELLA NOYES. Illustrated by Dora Noyes. ["Mediaeval Towns"]. (London: J. M. Dent and Company. 1904. Pp. xiv, 422.)

OF all the Italian cities, over which silence and desolation brood, none has made of death so noble a thing as Ferrara. The respect and

awe inspired by the grassy streets and empty squares possess the present author and account for the pleasant element of sympathy which pervades her book. Following the requirements of the series of which her volume is one, the historical account of Ferrara is supplemented by a detailed description of the city's monuments. This second part, as of least importance, we may dispose of first. It is a piece of work carefully done, and with as much vivacity as is consistent with the profession of authorized guide. Rising above the level and showing evidence of original study, is the chapter on the Ferrarese painters, who comprise a powerful and undeservedly neglected school, rising in Cossa and Dosso to heights of real distinction.

The historical section, embracing the bulkier half of her book, evidently placed the author in a predicament. A history with all the various information which one may reasonably expect under that head, could not easily be crammed within the allotted pages. Consequently she deliberately confined her attention to the ruling house of Este, to the accidents by field and flood of that much agitated family, and to the crown of poets and fair women with which its story is wreathed. Considering that Ferrara as a community of free men had but a meagre history, and further, that no sooner recognized as independent, it surrendered to a tyrant, winning thereby the sorry distinction of leading the way in that disastrous rush of the Italian communes into slavery, it is not difficult to approve, at least up to a certain point, the judgment of the author. Let it be admitted that in La Casa d'Este, that remarkable line of tyrants, who were among the few to legitimize their usurpation, lies the *nodus* of the historian's problem. But from a too rigid adherence to this view have resulted a number of painful omissions. Though eclipsed by the glory of their rulers, there lived in the shadow of the castle the people of Ferrara. They experimented with magistrates, they traded, dug canals, raised crops, in any case lived and died; further, the state prospered, spread toward the Apennines and the sea, was in complicated relations with its two feudal lords, pope and emperor. What, since there can be no question of law, was the practice of succession? A student opening a history of Ferrara may fairly hope to find a little more information on these matters than is afforded by Miss Noyes's volume, and may be led to suspect that the limitation of her interest to personalities is due not entirely to choice, but in part to her inability to do justice to the social, economic, and political forces, which are the real makers of a state's destiny.

Taken for what it is and is alone, a portrait gallery of distinguished men and women, this book has both worth and charm. In that long line of rulers from Azzo and Obizzo, whom Dante saw swimming in the torrent of blood, to decadent Alfonso, persecutor of the unhappy Tasso, a writer with a knack of portrait-painting will find matter enough for his pen. Add the princesses, poets, and painters, and the heaped riches become embarrassing. The author's romantic temperament informs all her presentations, but though one and all show an honest

attempt at an immediate vision of the prince or artist in hand, they leave the impression that she has not been able to free herself from the trammels of tradition. To treat the later Estes, the Ercoles and Alfonsos, other than as the giants with feet of clay which they were, is to fail to grasp political values. It is time too to give a new estimate of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso. Does not Carducci's *Ode to Ferrara* weigh more than all their wares? To conclude, Miss Noyes gives us a readable book and a faithful guide to the city's antiquities, but not a history, in the large sense, admitting us to the council of the fates.

FERDINAND SCHWILL.

*Études Critiques sur la Vie de Colomb avant ses Découvertes.* Les Origines de sa Famille, Les deux Colombo, ses prétendus Parents, La vraie Date de sa Naissance, Les Études et les premières Campagnes qu'il aurait faites, Son Arrivée en Portugal et le Combat Naval de 1476, Son Voyage au Nord, Son Établissement en Portugal, son Mariage, sa Famille Portugaise. Par HENRY VIGNAUD, Premier Secrétaire de l'Ambassade Américaine, Vice-Président de la Société des Américanistes. (Paris: H. Welter. 1905. Pp. 543.)

MR. VIGNAUD is well known by his earlier work on Columbus and Toscanelli, in which he showed that the former was not a correspondent of the latter, and could not have learned from the Florentine astronomer and geographer anything to put him on the lookout for a new world or a passage to the old one of Asia. In the present volume he gives a series of critical studies of successive periods and events in the youth of Columbus, in each of which he disproves one or other of the legends that have made the Columbus of history very unlike the real man. His main thesis is that Columbus told his son Ferdinand and Las Casas the stories made known after his death by that son and by Herrera and Oviedo and later chroniclers. He acquits Washington Irving, whose *Life of Columbus* was published in 1828, and Humboldt and later biographers and writers, of any blame for following these legends, for they had no access to other sources. He does, however, dismiss with short shrift Mr. John Boyd Thacher, who in our own day has written a life of Columbus, with too little reference to the great mass of material made public in the last few years. Mr. Vignaud pays due tribute to the researches of Henry Harrisse, but complains that he had no sense of historical perspective and did not appreciate the value of the facts he had unearthed. To Winsor he pays tribute for his clear historical vision that enabled him to make good use of the work of Harrisse and other students of the Columbian period. It was not until the numerous and important publications, in honor of the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America, by Spain and Italy, to celebrate their great hero, revealed a mass of hitherto unknown or inaccessible material, that the theories of Gonzalez de la Rosa and Ruge